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The *Lügat* of İstanbul: Reşad Ekrem Koçu's re-animation of an urban past

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Abstract

This article focuses on an alphabetically ordered collection titled *The Lügat of İstanbul Fifty Years Ago*, published in 1942 by the prolific Turkish historian and writer Reşad Ekrem Koçu. Despite its rich and lesser-known descriptions and stories of İstanbul's historical spaces, people, and events in each entry with anecdotes, quotes, and comments, the *Lügat* has remained relatively unknown. Koçu drew on the memoirs and journalistic essays of Turkish journalist Ahmed Rasim, who vividly captured the essence of the city in his writings during the 1890s. This article examines Koçu's endeavor to establish a methodology for urban historiography by rearranging and re-animating the depictions of the mundane urban past in a new encyclopedic genre, *lügat*, while placing it within the wider framework of urban history literature in İstanbul. Through a critical analysis of the narratives portraying the perils and pleasures of İstanbul in the *Lügat*, this article illustrates how Koçu's classifications are intertwined with subjective interpretations rather than rational objectifications.

Keywords: Reşad Ekrem Koçu; urban history; İstanbul; *Lügat*; encyclopedias

Introduction

“If we squeeze the works of Ahmed Rasim, the scent of İstanbul drips” (Koçu 1938, 4).

Reşad Ekrem Koçu (1905–1975), a prolific Turkish historian, writer, and researcher, is well recognized today for his lifelong and never-finished project, the *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul Encyclopedia).¹ Two years before he started the *Encyclopedia*, Koçu composed a dictionary titled *Ahmed Rasim ve İstanbul: Elli Yıl Evvelki İstanbul'un Lügatı* (Ahmed Rasim and İstanbul: The Dictionary of İstanbul Fifty Years Ago). Under the pen-name Ahmed Bülend Koçu, he serialized this work, known as *Lügat* (lexicon, dictionary, encyclopedia), with 184 alphabetically ordered entries across eighteen issues in the pages of the popular Turkish illustrated journal, *Servet-i Fünûn-Uyanış*

¹ The *İstanbul Encyclopedia*'s first edition was published from 1944 to 1948, and the second from 1958 to 1974, with Koçu gathering contributions from various writers and printing it as separate pamphlets. The publishing process stopped at the eleventh volume covering the entry *Gökçinar* in 1974 because of the lack of financial support.



published in the popular press (Eyice 1975, 1976; Pamukciyan 1990; Şeren 1976; Yücel 1975). The *Encyclopedia* gained recognition in academic circles in the late 1990s for its content and methodological novelties (Ayvaz 2007; Gözüdik 2003; Ulucutsoy 2014). The *Encyclopedia*'s content on sexuality also influenced researchers to reevaluate Koçu's work as an archive of queer subjects (Altınay 2015; Boone 2017; Kuru 2022; Sarıtaş 2021). Additionally, a growing body of literature focuses on the architectural spaces of İstanbul in the *Encyclopedia* (Hamadeh and Kafescioğlu 2023; Kahveci 2020; Kentel 2022). While the *Encyclopedia* has gained critical acclaim, the *Lügat* has yet to be extensively researched. My aim is to situate the *Lügat* within Koçu's bibliography and examine its significance in the urban history literature of İstanbul by analyzing his methodology, historiography, and engagement with the city.

The *Lügat* stands as a testament to the dedicated effort of an early Turkish scholar to document İstanbul's history. Amidst Turkification efforts of the new republic, Koçu's work defied erasure, valiantly preserving the multi-ethnic history of Ottoman İstanbul. However, while Koçu unearthed marginalized voices, he also aligned with the prevailing nationalist sentiment of his era, often exhibiting a patronizing attitude towards non-Turkish communities in his narratives. By translating and reorganizing the late nineteenth-century texts into an encyclopedic format, Koçu bridged the linguistic gap created by the 1928 alphabet reform from Arabic to Latin script. Hence, Koçu provided an urban history for younger Turkish generations in their late twenties in the 1940s who found late Ottoman texts linguistically difficult to comprehend. Finally, the *Lügat* and its successor the *Encyclopedia* represented modernist pushes in the age of Encyclopedism. The entry-based structure of the *Lügat* contained classifications that demonstrate how Koçu deployed his historiography in an encyclopedic genre. Instead of presenting a coherent narrative of the city, Koçu's entries for his *Lügat* were based on his selection of stories he found worth re-animating, bringing back to life. His approach highlighted already-forgotten mundane places and people and positioned them in the urban history literature of İstanbul.

The *Lügat* serves as Koçu's experimental precursor to the *Encyclopedia*, a testament to his visionary ambition. Ahmed Rasim (1864–1932), a prominent Turkish writer and journalist of the late Ottoman Empire, was Koçu's primary inspiration for engaging with İstanbul. When producing the *Lügat*, Koçu used two specific works of Ahmed Rasim: *Şehir Mektupları* (City Letters) and *Fuḥş-i Atik* (Illicit Acts in the Past).⁴ *Şehir Mektupları*, a collection of Ahmed Rasim's journalistic essays on İstanbul, was serialized in the *Malumat* journal between 1897 and 1899, before being published as a book in 1911. *Fuḥş-i Atik*, a vivid chronicle of illicit acts interwoven with autobiographical details, was published in 1922. Both books provided Koçu with a gateway to unearth urban pleasures and perils of the 1890s (Figure 2).

This article centers on Koçu's strategic utilization of Ahmed Rasim's works to shape his *Lügat of İstanbul*. First, I present briefly the early Turkish media environment in İstanbul and its connection with the emerging periodical press of late Ottoman İstanbul to contextualize Koçu's position within this landscape. Next, I look into these two İstanbul-obsessed writers, Ahmed Rasim and Koçu, and analyze their interrelated

⁴ The final entry of the *Lügat*, with the title *Son* (The End), reads: "These words are composed from Ahmed Rasim's *Fuḥş-i Atik* and *Şehir Mektupları*." See Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Son," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, August 13, 1942, 155.



Figure 2. Illustrated page from Ahmed Rasim's *Fuhş-i Atik* (left). Cover of Ahmed Rasim's *Şehir Mektupları* (right).

texts to demonstrate both writers' distinct styles of narrating the city in different eras (the 1890s and 1940s). After interrogating their distinctive approaches, I examine Koçu's *Lügat* under the topics of the city's history of pleasures and perils by closely reading a selection of the entries of the *Lügat*. The study unearths Koçu's curation – what facets of Ahmed Rasim's İstanbul narratives were assimilated, and how did Koçu weave his unique tapestry within the *Lügat*'s pages? Drawing on these questions, I revisit Koçu's creative attempt to depict an extended yet fractured story of İstanbul to analyze the themes in Koçu's depiction of İstanbul. I argue how Koçu's classifications go hand in hand with subjective interpretations rather than rational objectifications. This methodology to remembering İstanbul shapes a distinct perspective, which in turn serves as the foundation for his next grand project, the *İstanbul Encyclopedia*.

Reşad Ekrem Koçu, early Turkish Republic and writing İstanbul

Reşad Ekrem Koçu was born in 1905, amidst the turmoil of the end of the Empire. Witnessing World War I, the ensuing occupation of İstanbul (1918–1923), and the transition to a republic in 1923, Koçu graduated from Darülfünun with a history degree in 1931, at a time when İstanbul was undergoing significant modernization. This era saw the abolishment of the Sultanate in 1922, secularization of religious institutions, adoption of Western legal codes (including the shift from Arabic to Latin script in 1928), and the capital's relocation to Ankara in 1923 – an act that symbolized a break from the past and the shaping of a new Turkish identity (Bozdoğan and Kasaba 1997; Gül 2017).

İstanbul, with its poor hygienic standards, unreliable public transport, and irregular street patterns, appeared outdated to early Republican modernizers advocating for radical remodeling. During the 1930s and 1940s, the Turkish government endeavored to reshape İstanbul in line with Kemalist principles, as evidenced by numerous articles of the time. For instance, a catalog book titled *Güzelleşen İstanbul* (İstanbul as It Becomes Beautiful), illustrating public works ordered by İsmet İnönü, lamented: “Unfortunately, the tasteless and disrespectful constructions of the last centuries have gradually killed the originality of noble Turkish urbanism” (Daver et al. 1944, 5). It was within this framework that Koçu committed to documenting and remembering İstanbul, providing readers of his generation with a window into the city’s urban past that was no more.

Koçu initiated the *Lügat* project to re-animate the historical experience of daily life in İstanbul. Re-animation implies that Koçu’s approach sought to bring the lost past of the city back to life in the form of a particular genre, dictionary. Koçu’s re-animation transcends mere nostalgic longing, delving into İstanbul’s intricate fabric of daily life – a canvas of both entertainment and crime. While he maintains a critical approach to interpreting Ahmed Rasim’s texts, he also delicately captures the smallest details interwoven into urban history. For instance, Flora, once a celebrated Balkan canton singer of the 1890s, gained new significance in İstanbul’s history through her inclusion as an entry title, alongside other mundane places – restaurants, tavernas, brothels – or people, such as musicians or waiters.⁵ His foremost goal was to immortalize fleeting moments of İstanbul’s 1890s for readers in the 1940s who could no longer directly experience them.

Writing the stories of İstanbul became an aspirational passion for Koçu. When he was sixty years old, he wrote: “*İstanbul Encyclopedia* means everything to me. Completing this *şehir kütüğü* (city register), the culmination of my life, is now my sole purpose” (Koçu 1965, 2). İstanbul attracted – and still attracts – the curious eyes of orientalist, officers, novelists, and poets. The rise of the periodical press in the Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century allowed the intellectual elite to vividly chronicle their daily urban encounters. These texts, published in newspapers and journals, offered readers insights into the ephemeral joys and adventures of modern urban life (de la Motte and Przyblyski 1999). Benedict Anderson’s (2006, 33) notion that “reading a newspaper is like reading a novel whose author has abandoned any thought of a coherent plot” underscores the role of periodicals as sources for micro-narratives. These narratives on urban space remain non-linear and varied, woven by diverse perspectives – each issue adding nuances and reshaping the storyline.

İstanbul’s everyday life found expression in diverse literary forms, yielding a chorus of voices that shaped the city’s historical narrative:

The new writing style, organized in descriptive fragments and firmly grounded in visual experience, had become a common literary strategy among late Ottoman authors of various kinds, who were keen to penetrate the flow and texture of everyday reality in their causerie columns, city letters, memoirs, or popular history narratives (Ersoy 2021, 248).

⁵ Ahmed Bülend Koçu, “Flora,” *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, March 19, 1942, 210.

Columnists and feuilletonists had already started writing depictions of the experiences of modern life in cities like Paris, Berlin, or London where printing technology was widely established. Instead of grand narratives that aimed for homogeneity and consistency, these emerging micro-narratives navigated modernity via incoherent, critical, and fragmentary lenses.⁶ Written in a single breath with no regard for historical consistency, micro-narratives challenge literary forms, prompting readers to contemplate their eclectic and inconclusive nature, all while challenging a sense of restlessness and anxiety (Huyssen 2015; Putnam 2006). This form of writing produces concepts immanent in life that illustrate the power of small things.⁷

Amid the emerging print culture of 1890s' İstanbul, distinct writers penned succinct texts delving into urban social life, each imprinting their unique style. Column titles in newspapers and journals like post, letter, and conversation, e.g. *İstanbul Postası* (İstanbul Post), *Şehir Mektubu* (City Letter), and *Musahabe-i Fenniye* (Conversations on Science) attest to the thrilling intellectual venture of chronicling the metropolis within brief texts. Ahmed İhsan [Tokgöz] (1868–1942), the *Servet-i Fünûn* journal's editor-in-chief, was one of those writers who stood out.⁸ His weekly column entitled *İstanbul Postası*, which focused on the writer's daily leisure activities, walks, and diverse public transport journeys, epitomized the writing style of the 1890s. For instance, when Ahmed İhsan wrote about the screening of the first selection of films for journalists, he included a passage about the tedious crowds in the streets:

The pedestrians in Beyoğlu were packed on both sides of the pavements because of the crowded cars. We were a little late for our meal; it was half-past ten when we arrived in Tünel (funicular station). Tickets in our hands, we heard the whistle blow and decided to watch the scene for a while. Guess, what we saw? A man standing right in front of the wagon preoccupied with reading a notice hanging on the side!⁹

By asking questions to readers, Ahmed İhsan invites them to join in a conversation. Although the author changed the title of his column to *Musahabe* (Conversation) and then to *Hafta Hasbihali* (Talk of the Week) in later years, İstanbul remained his focal point. Ahmed İhsan's descriptions became precious gems for Koçu to grasp the city's historical daily life, especially when composing his *İstanbul Encyclopedia*.

Koçu drew upon late nineteenth-century luminaries such as Ahmed Midhat, Ahmed İhsan, and Ahmed Rasim, whose vivid accounts revealed the daily mosaic of

⁶ For instance, the letters and diaries of the World War I veterans are prominent examples of micro-narratives. These narratives reshape the grand narrative of the Great War (Shaw and Donnelly 2021).

⁷ Koçu's methodology of urban historiography uses these short texts heavily. He ended several entries of the *İstanbul Encyclopedia* with this note: "No further records." Even though he was aware that there was no comprehensive information other than these short texts, he still included every detail he could find from any source, including those micro-narratives.

⁸ On the cover page of *Servet-i Fünûn*, the journal was introduced to readers as follows: "Visual Ottoman journal that speaks of literature, science, industry, translated news, travel, novels, etc." The journal uses the verb *bahsetmek* (to speak of something) in its description, a particular word that offers a conversational style of communication.

⁹ Ahmed İhsan, "İstanbul Postası," *Servet-i Fünûn*, December 17, 1896, 226.

urban life. The transition from Arabic script to Latin in 1928 posed a linguistic barrier to accessing this past. By 1942, as Koçu crafted his *Lügat*, Ahmed Rasim's works were orthographically and linguistically inaccessible to younger Turkish generations in their late twenties. The journalist Şevket Rado called this period "The Era of Translation" and stated, "We are bringing the dead works of Turkish genius back to life for new generations."¹⁰ Koçu participated in this revival, as he was a member of the same generation of writers who experienced the linguistic transition by transliterating texts, such as *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, *Surname*, *Viladetname*, and memoirs of Halil İbrahim Aşçıdede. Additionally, he translated several travelogues, including Amicis's *Costantinopoli*, Montague's *Turkish Embassy Letters*, and Craven's *A Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople*.

Yet, Koçu's *Lügat* was not a mere translation of texts, but rather a critical attempt to capture significant memories, resurrecting forgotten people and deconstructed places. Similar to Frankenstein's endeavor to bring life to a patchwork of dead bodies, Koçu in the *Lügat* sutured and stitched together a portrait of İstanbul's past, employing the encyclopedic form to re-animate the city's history based on Ahmed Rasim's accounts. This marked his initial exploration into this methodology. Reflecting on writing about İstanbul and his methodology, under the pseudonym Kamber, journalist Vâlâ Nurettin commented:

Numerous authors have written about İstanbul so far. However, I believe that the bona fide writer of İstanbul will be Reşad Ekrem Koçu Writing İstanbul is not a task one person can easily shoulder. Yet, he observed İstanbul for twenty years without interruption by wandering into its every corner. He took notes, arranged them in order, and then one day when he put them in alphabetical order, he noticed that enough material was accumulated for producing an encyclopedia of İstanbul.¹¹

Nurettin pointed out that Koçu's exploration of İstanbul's past began well before his *Lügat* project, tracing back to the late 1920s. The *Encyclopedia* drew from a variety of sources, encompassing both historical and contemporary aspects of the city. In contrast, the *Lügat* specifically honed in on historical accounts, particularly through two works by Ahmed Rasim, which provided Koçu with a distinct perspective on the daily life of the 1890s.

Koçu's alphabetical lens on the city

Koçu's endeavor to bring structure to momentary daily stories of İstanbul by deploying classificatory methodologies aligns with the growing popularity of the encyclopedia as a modern genre (Boone 2017, 57). The drive for classification and rationalization, pivotal to modernization, saw the encyclopedia as a key genre through which this desire manifested itself (Zerubavel 1991). In the early Republican period of İstanbul, this urge materialized in works such as Osman Nuri Ergin's 1934

¹⁰ Şevket Rado, "Sözün Gelişi: Tercüme Devri," *Akşam*, January 9, 1944, 2.

¹¹ Kamber, "Bir Ziyaret: İstanbul Ansiklopedisi Muharririne Göre İstanbul Ne Alemde?," *Akşam*, November 17, 1947, 5.



Figure 3. Reşad Ekrem Koçu in his office.

Source: Kadir Has University Library – Salt Research, Reşad Ekrem Koçu's Archive.

İstanbul Şehri Rehberi (İstanbul City Guide)¹² and the *İstanbul Telefon Rehberi* (İstanbul Telephone Directories) published from 1934 to 1947. Koçu's classification of İstanbul, initially as the *Lügat* in 1942 and later as the *Encyclopedia* in 1944, reflected these modernist rationalization ideologies of the time. By 1937, Koçu had already begun amassing notes on İstanbul, stating in a later interview: "I am collecting the current information about İstanbul in the form of filing cards in alphabetical order. I will publish an encyclopedia. It is my life's purpose. I dedicate myself to this."¹³ At the age of thirty-two years, Koçu started to document and classify the information about İstanbul (Figure 3).

Despite the modernist push for classification, Koçu presented İstanbul through a lens uniquely his own, re-animating entries from the works of respected journalists and authors. Koçu's approach to historiography involved acts of reading, collecting, and retelling the stories he loved and thought marvelous about the city (Altınay 2015, 98). Recent scholarship scrutinizes Koçu's archival practice and subject selection, particularly his queering of past texts. "Koçu not only reinscribed these subjects [marginalized and submerged voices] into the history of the nation but also resisted the hegemonic modes of historical knowledge production" (Altınay 2015, 90). Koçu's use of the alphabetic order to arrange his random, yet intriguing, subjects, facts, and fictions gave voice to these marginalized, forgotten, and submerged perspectives.

¹² Koçu used this city guide to draw maps of the districts for his *İstanbul Encyclopedia*. For his method of creating cartographic representation using the guide, see Kentel (2022).

¹³ Vâ-Nû, "Akşamdan Akşama: Türkçe Ansiklopedilere Dair," *Akşam*, December 11, 1944, 3.

Koçu's retelling of İstanbul's captivating moments crafted a rare history – a “collection of facts and curiosities” as expressed by Pamuk (2005, 152) – providing modern readers a distinctive lens to see the city's essence.

Koçu's interest in writing İstanbul's multifaceted history and culture gives rise to a varied narrative, reflecting both traditional and novel approaches. His reliance on a diverse range of historical texts from the fifteenth to the late nineteenth centuries, incorporating not just scholarly works but also treaties, cultural compilations, and firsthand accounts, extends beyond typical mid-twentieth-century scholarship (Hamadeh and Kafescioğlu 2023, 490). Additionally, contemporary contributions, notably İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal's *Son Asır Türk Şairleri*¹⁴ (Last Century's Turkish Poets), serve as significant references for Koçu to shape his registering account of the city (Kuru 2022, 32). İnal's work stands out as an extension of the *Şair Tezkireleri* (biographical dictionaries of poets) genre, a reflection of Koçu's methodological essence. The term *tezkire*, derived from Arabic, signifies a reminder and denotes small writings like letters or notes, primarily referring to a literary genre presenting the life and work of distinguished figures across professions, notably poets, calligraphers, architects, and even master florists. In the sixteenth century, the poet Latîfî was the first to organize poets alphabetically rather than by chronological order, setting a standard for the structure of Turkish biographical dictionaries (İsen 2010). Following Latîfî, these dictionaries typically adhered to an alphabetical structure, with each biography seamlessly continuing from the point where its predecessor concluded.

Koçu engaged with this deep-rooted tradition of remembering to craft a comprehensive *tezkire* of İstanbul, blending renowned people with non-humans, places, and events. Beyond mere description, his works delve into the *tezkire* genre's critical depth, enhanced by examples like poem verses and song lyrics, offering insightful perspectives. As Irvin Cemil Schick (2023, 52–53) highlights, Koçu's encyclopedic approach diverges from modern counterparts like *Meydan Larousse* or *Ana Britannica*, suggesting that Koçu's work aligns more with the encyclopedic heritage of the pre-modern and early modern Islamic world. This cultural mismatch makes Koçu's works particularly fascinating and odd for today's readers, an aspect that finds resonance in Pamuk's writings. Despite its modernist appearance, the alphabetically structured subjective content anchors *Lügat* in the Ottoman literary tradition, illustrating Koçu's novel integration within a historical framework.

Koçu drew deeply from the literary past while actively interacting with the dynamics of his time, engaging in dialogues with various writers and showing adeptness with emerging media technologies and methods of production.¹⁵ Koçu embodied the role of a twentieth-century *şehir mektupçusu* (city letter writer), using

¹⁴ From 1930 to 1953, İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal (1988) published this biographical dictionary of poets, a work that Koçu also referred to in the *İstanbul Encyclopedia*. İnal stands out by often referencing sources and quoting documents, aligning him with modern historians. Similar to Koçu, he provides the life stories of some of these individuals with detail, while others receive less attention. For examination of methodologies of İnal and Koçu, see Ayvaz (2007).

¹⁵ Selim Kuru (2022) notes that male writers from the late Ottoman and early Turkish periods have influenced Koçu's historiography and writership, listing these writers as both Koçu's pathfinders and followers: Ahmed Mithat, Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, İbnülemin Mahmut Kemal İnan, Kamil Kepecioğlu, Ahmed Rasim, Osman Nuri Ergin, Muallim Cevdet, Mithat Cemal Kuntay, Nahid Sırrı Örik, Abdullah Ziya Kozanoğlu, Sait Faik Abasıyanık, and Salah Bırsel.

the serialized, accelerated, and visualized media interface facilitated by advancements in printing and new technologies to revitalize and disseminate the cultural heritage of the past (Ersoy 2023, 64). Recognizing the potentials of the periodical press of his time, Koçu serialized the *Lügat* in *Servet-i Fünûn* and later released the *İstanbul Encyclopedia* in fascicles, alongside other illustrated journals on newsstands. Essentially, Koçu emerges as an İstanbul writer who skillfully wove the rich Ottoman literary heritage into the serialized encyclopedic format that characterized his time.

Encyclopedism had already been on the rise in the early years of the Republic among the intellectual elite. The journalist Niyazi Ahmed Banoğlu remarked: “The encyclopedia has become the essential companion for every literate, from the youngest to the oldest who can read and write.”¹⁶ Similarly, in the same year, Şevket Rado expressed his enthusiasm, stating: “Until recently, one of the publications we needed most was the encyclopedia.”¹⁷ Public intellectuals like Banoğlu and Rado praised the emerging encyclopedias of the nascent Republic, either completed or underway, including Rado’s *Hayat Ansiklopedisi* (1932–1936), İbrahim Alaettin Gövsa’s *Meşhur Adamlar Ansiklopedisi* (1933–1938), Agah Sırrı Levend’s *İnönü Ansiklopedisi* (1940–1987), *İslam-Türk Ansiklopedisi* (1940–1944), Server İskit’s *Aylık Ansiklopedi* (1944–1950), Velid Ebuziyya’s *Fen ve Sanat Ansiklopedisi* (1944–1946), and Koçu’s first edition of the *İstanbul Encyclopedia*. Among these works, what makes Koçu’s encyclopedia unique is that the alphabetically arranged entries were shaped around a specific city, all the while heavily engaging with the Ottoman cultural past.

Alongside encyclopedias, the extensive publication of articles by well-read authors specializing in Ottoman history, including Koçu, from the late 1920s to the 1960s in Turkish periodicals, often greatly embellished, reflects a significant interest in the Empire’s everyday historical narratives and attracted large readerships (Birkan 2019, 314). Column titles such as Sermed Muhtar’s (1931) *30 Sene Evvel İstanbul* (30 Years Ago in İstanbul) and Vâlâ Nurettin’s (1938, as Yürük Çelebi) *Eski ve Yeni İstanbul* (Old and New İstanbul) in the *Akşam* newspaper present the fascination with İstanbul’s changing setting throughout time. Among these authors, Koçu carved out a unique niche with his encyclopedic passionate commitment to re-animating existing accounts of İstanbul’s social and cultural fabric, particularly those of Ahmed Rasim in the case of *Lügat*.

Engaging with Ahmed Rasim’s İstanbul

In his journey of writing about İstanbul, Koçu was deeply influenced by Ahmed Rasim’s vibrant portrayal of the city. Five years after Ahmed Rasim’s death, in 1937, a commemorative event at Şehremini People’s House celebrated the writer’s multifaceted contributions, encompassing music, literature, satire, and journalism. Koçu contributed to the program with a section titled *İstanbul’dan Anonim Sesler* (Anonymous Voices from İstanbul).¹⁸ Different from other speakers in this event, Koçu focused on the author’s İstanbul.

¹⁶ Niyazi Ahmed Banoğlu, “Ansiklopedinin Lüzumu ve Ehemmiyeti,” *Vakit*, June 25, 1944, 2.

¹⁷ Şevket Rado, “Sözün Gelişi: Bulmak ve Bunamak,” *Akşam*, December 5, 1944, 5.

¹⁸ “Ahmed Rasim Gecesi,” *Akşam*, July 29, 1937, 4.

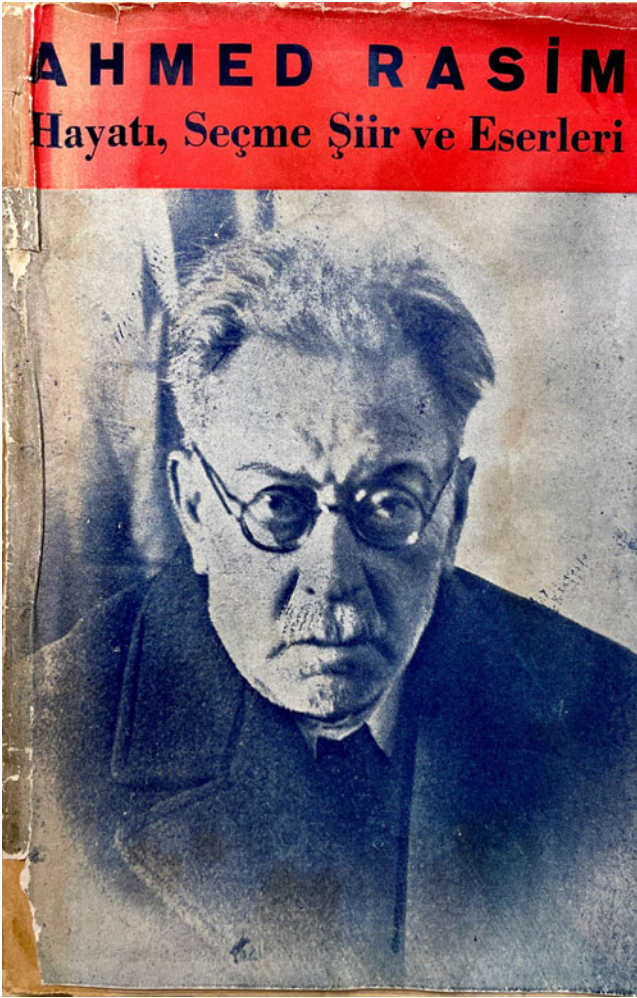


Figure 4. Cover of Koçu's biography of Ahmed Rasim titled *Ahmed Rasim: Hayatı, Seçme Şiir ve Eserleri*.

One year after that event, in 1938, Koçu penned biographies of two scholars he admired. One was of historian Ahmed Refik Altınay (1881–1937) for whom Koçu had worked as an assistant at Darülfünun. The other was about Ahmed Rasim (Figure 4), in which Koçu (1938, 3) drew attention to a key feature of the author's portrayal of İstanbul – his ability to write about even the most ordinary aspects of life. Şerif Aktaş (1987, 35), a scholar well versed in Ahmed Rasim's works, noted that his writings were filled with a zest for life, capturing the joy in the often-mundane tapestry of existence. Koçu (1938, 3) also defined Ahmed Rasim as “the one who detects the smallest and most volatile movements.” Koçu appreciated Ahmed Rasim's acute observation of the “colors, smells, sounds and movements of his time” (Yücel 2019, 20). If a scholar like Koçu had not grasped these details in his texts and crystallized them in the *Lügat* with names of specific spaces and people under respective entries, these records could have vanished and long been obliterated. Hence, he sought to revive Ahmed Rasim's essential

memories of the past, believing him to be among the rare writers who “gained the power to frame a century in his memories and [city] letters” (Koçu 1938, 3). Ahmed Rasim, who wandered in places that had disappeared by Koçu’s time, crafted an enduring image of the city that was echoed in the *Lügat*.

Koçu compared Ahmed Rasim’s works to the emerging media of his time:

In Ahmed Rasim’s writings, particularly those about İstanbul, encompassing its streets, houses, monuments and public institutions, tavernas and barrel-houses, recreation areas, ferries and boats, trams and cars, in a word, the landscape, and its people, stream as a *sesli ve renkli bir film* (colorful sound motion picture) (Koçu 1938, 3).

Ahmed Rasim’s memory functioned as the device for recording sound and images, enabling him to animate the city within his texts (Aktaş 1987, 71–72). This methodology of animation does not only make Ahmed Rasim’s works interesting stories, but also it helps to re-establish a connection with the past (Ersoy 2017, 202).

To achieve this, the author employed his distinctive “counting method,” interconnecting various components in his sentences, conceptualized by Aktaş. Using the method, the author provided various lists and classifications of people and spaces in his writings, especially in *Şehir Mektupları*:

This narrative style enables Ahmed Rasim to leisurely roam around the environment he wishes to portray, much like a camera lens. Starting with the most striking element, he presents the components that make up the scene one by one to the readers’ attention (Aktaş 1997, 31).

The author’s approach enabled him to animate the continuously changing and dynamic environment around him, creating layered portrayals. Removing certain countable phrases from the author’s lengthy sentences does not diminish the overall narrative, similar to how the absence of a few individuals does not detract from the crowd’s impact (Aktaş 1987, 77).

Examining Ahmed Rasim’s collection of writings, Koçu saw İstanbul as a dynamic reservoir of information. The author’s extensive sentences were ripe for decoding, sifting, counting, and arranging alphabetically. For instance, he outlined the grand tableau of Ahmed Rasim’s İstanbul as follows:

Fishermen, firefighters, vagrants, gamblers, well-known figures of the era, artisans, the voices of women and children heard among the neighborhoods, mixed and anonymous voices during fires, night raids and taverna fights; layer by layer, class by class and age by age all İstanbulites spoke their own languages, dialects and slangs in Ahmed Rasim’s texts (Koçu 1938, 3–4).

This diversity that Koçu identified in the author’s works inspired him, as later he also incessantly provided similar lists of spaces and people for the *İstanbul Encyclopedia*.

Ahmed Rasim possessed a peculiar talent for reflecting the collective attention of İstanbul’s inhabitants, intertwining his own identity with that of the city’s people, almost embodying diverse voices of the public within himself (Aktaş 1987, 78). His

deliberate compilation of late Ottoman life resonated deeply with Koçu because, despite potential omissions in his re-animated collection, İstanbul still retained its stack-like appearance. Koçu crafted his own historiography by reshaping Ahmed Rasim's observations into a series of entries in his *Lügat*, thus paving the road for a novel kind of readership. The *Lügat*'s readership experience stood apart from popular journalistic essays, historical articles, or fictional works. It allowed for an alphabetical journey through Ahmed Rasim's İstanbul in the *Lügat* and then applied the same methodologies to other writers' portrayal of the city in the *Encyclopedia*, letting readers wander around the city by following entries on specific topics, in contrast to the typically linear and chronological narratives found in other genres.

The *Lügat of İstanbul Fifty Years Ago*

Reşad Ekrem Koçu employed the pen-name Ahmed Bülend Koçu for publishing the *Lügat* in the *Servet-i Fünûn* journal,¹⁹ a pseudonym that he had used before the *Lügat*'s publication in several historical articles in newspapers. He continued to use this name for biographical novels aimed at children after the *Lügat*.²⁰ Furthermore, in the *İstanbul Encyclopedia*, he adopted the pen-name A. Bülend Koçu, primarily for the illustrations and maps he created.²¹ Although not a strict convention, he often opted for Ahmed Bülend Koçu when writing about specific individuals, such as Ahmed Rasim for the *Lügat*.

The *Lügat of İstanbul Fifty Years Ago* features entries on people (e.g. Baba Yaver, Bıçakçı Petri, Kalfa Hanım), spaces (e.g. Aksaray, Galata, Kağıthane), and events (e.g. Akşam Piyasaları [Evening Promenades], Bayram Yeri Eğlenceleri [Festival Places Entertainments], Yılbaşı [New Year]). Analyzing the 184 entries in the *Lügat*, I identified seventy-three entries explicitly emphasizing people (forty-seven for specific individuals, twenty-six for groups, often occupational), seventy-four entries dedicated to spaces (sixty-four for specific locations by name, ten for typologies), and thirty-seven entries on events and rituals (see [Supplementary Table](#)).

The space-related entries span districts, streets, parks, coffeehouses, restaurants, theaters, breweries, tavernas, hammams, casinos, barbershops, bakeries, and brothels. While most entries specify locations by name, others like *Oteller* (Hotels) or *Berber Dükkanları* (Barbershops) allude to general layouts and activities in those spaces. The people-centered entries capture a spectrum of occupations such as actresses, comics, musicians, doctors, officers, taverna owners, drivers, and peddlers. In addition, Koçu also included people for whom he did not provide particular names but general information such as in *Köprü Memurları, Köprücüler* (Toll Collectors of the Bridge) or *Kağıthane'nin Şık Beyleri* (Elegant Men of Kağıthane). Entries on events often lack details about specific locations or people, instead offering a glimpse into the temporality and everyday life rituals of the past. For instance, *Geceleri Tenvirat*

¹⁹ Besides the *Lügat*, Koçu wrote a few other articles in *Servet-i Fünûn* about various topics and a serialized literary work titled *Hanımefendi* under his real name before the *Lügat*.

²⁰ For instance, the articles titled *Yeniçeri Zorbalarından Nakılcı Mustafa* (1940) and *Şeyh Selami Efendi ile İbrahim Kethüda* (1941), both in the newspaper *Haber*, were signed under the pen-name Ahmed Bülend Koçu as well as his historical biography novels for children such as *Balabancık* (1944) and *Murat Reis'in Oğlu* (1947).

²¹ Occasionally, he also signed some of the entries in the *Encyclopedia* using this pseudonym. Apart from A. Bülend Koçu, he also utilized other pseudonyms in the *Encyclopedia*, including Hüsnü Kinaylı.

(Lighting at Nights) describes the absence of municipal street lanterns, noting how people would use their lanterns to navigate the dark streets if they ventured out after dinner to a coffeehouse, taverna, or gathering.²² This entry builds upon an account in the memoir *Fuhş-i Atik*, where the author mentions, “I grabbed a lantern and went out after dinner” (Rasim 1922, 117). Koçu generalized this ritual as a customary practice among İstanbulites. While Koçu often quoted Ahmed Rasim in entries about people and spaces, he tended to paraphrase those related to events.

The İstanbul depicted in Koçu’s *Lügat* is a product of subjective authorial choices, focusing on districts of particular interest to him. Among 184 entries, Koçu referred to Beyoğlu in fifty-seven and Aksaray in twenty-five, whereas other districts such as Fenerbahçe, Kadıköy, or Kağıthane were each mentioned in less than five entries. Similarly, he selectively spotlighted the lives of distinct subcultures, including *külhanis*²³ (blackguards), *nazenins*²⁴ (sex workers), *komiks*²⁵ (comedians), and *çalgıcıs*²⁶ (musicians). These choices reflect Koçu’s enduring perspective on shaping his historiography through the portrayal of urban history.

Koçu further enriched the narrative by introducing specific terminologies, assigning nuanced labels to capture the essence of different locales and figures. Despite not being originally used by Ahmed Rasim, terms such as *kibar* (elegant) for dining places like *Filip*, *Löbon*, and *Lüksenburg*, and *rezaletane* (house of disgrace) for entertainment venues such as *Amerikan Tiyatrosu* (American Theater), *Avrupa Tiyatrosu* (European Theater), and *Kuşlu Tiyatrosu* (Kuşlu Theater) emerge in Koçu’s work. He creatively employed the suffix *-hane* (house) to emphasize specific attributes of various places, including labels like *fuhuşhane* (house of prostitution), *sefaletane*²⁷ (house of poverty) or *gülinçhane* (house of fun) in the *Lügat*. These venues were often described as *en namlı* (most renowned) and *meşhur* (famous), proving the *Lügat*’s capacity to capture essential historical settings for its readers in 1942. By drawing from Ahmed Rasim’s texts and linguistic style, Koçu formulated new architectural terminology for nineteenth-century İstanbul, marked by houses of disgrace and misery. He transformed the author’s memoirs into spatial typologies, thus constructing his own historiography.

²² Ahmed Bülend Koçu, “Geceleri Tenvirat,” *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, March 19, 1942, 211.

²³ The term *külhan* originally referred to the fire-rooms of the hammams and later became associated with the riffraff of the city due to their stays in those rooms. *Külhan* was translated in *Redhouse’s Turkish Dictionary* as “the fireplace of a bath” and *külhani* as “a little blackguard (as usually to be found at night in the fire-rooms of public baths)” (Redhouse 1880, 730).

²⁴ The term *nazenin* was translated in *Redhouse’s Turkish Dictionary* as “a beautiful, graceful girl, disdainful in her gracefulness, or graceful in her bashful boldness” (Redhouse 1880, 829). Koçu used this term mostly for sex workers of the 1890s in the *Lügat*.

²⁵ Besides actresses, Koçu also gave space for specific comedians such as in the entries *Corci*, *Mehmet Kanbur*, and *Todori*, where he often criticized their performances as disgraceful.

²⁶ Among 184 entries, Koçu created eighteen entries about specific musicians of the 1890s, including violinists, clarinetists, *saz*, *qanun*, *zurna*, *kemençe*, *lavta*, *ud*, and fife players. In the entry for the coffeehouse *Çalğı*, he described the popularity of musical performances, listing famous musicians of 1890s. See Ahmed Bülend Koçu, “Çalğı,” *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, March 5, 1942, 190.

²⁷ Koçu portrayed the hotels of İstanbul as *sefaletane* that had foul odor all over. Pasko’s Hotel in Beyoğlu was a prime example of this typology, which lacked light and frequently hosted drunks who were unable to find their way home. See Ahmed Bülend Koçu, “Pasko (Otelci), Paskonun Oteli,” *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, July 9, 1942, 92. He linked immodest behaviors with the city’s most unsanitary locations.

In the *Lügat*, the portrayal of İstanbul alternates between detailed narratives and concise descriptions, reflecting the city's multifaceted pleasure landscapes through depth and brevity. The compendium includes entries bursting with life, where crowded scenes come alive through engaging dialogues, enchanting songs, and poignant poems, providing a deep dive into the unique characteristics of each locale. Conversely, some places receive brief mentions, only covering their location and typology-based information. When Ahmed Rasim wrote his experience in detail, Koçu could build thicker descriptions rendering a place from the past more vivid. A notable instance of such depiction is the taverna *Kadifeli*:

In Galata, on Mumhane Street, there existed an establishment serving liquor. Every evening, it was packed to the brim, bustling. The waiters moved back and forth akin to weaving looms in constant motion. Among them, one with extremely curly, bubbly hair would emerge from the buffet area . . . “A waiter approached us. He guided us through a narrow, winding staircase to an upstairs room and seated us at a table. At this time, the waterfront promenade was yet to be constructed. The room perched directly above the shore, offering panoramic views of the dock.”

One of Kadifeli's famous waiters was Hırsto. He spoke Turkish very poorly; he even spoke *rumca* (greek) (sic):

— *Véve* (Cheers)

— *Ena bukali duziko . . . ke diyo bires!* (One bottle of douzico . . . and two beers!.)

— *Lüferaki fresko* (Fresh bluefish)²⁸

In his memoirs, Ahmed Rasim placed himself at the core of his narratives, weaving observations around his perspective and lending his prose conversational authenticity (Aktaş 1997, 69). Koçu, deciphering this narrative and weaving in direct quotes from the author, not only mapped Kadifeli's physical location but also breathed life into its ambiance, inviting readers into an immersive journey back in time. The venue's essence emerges through various details, from the daily traits of its waitstaff to the ambiance and sounds that define the space, elevating Kadifeli from obscurity to a palpable memory. Koçu's account transcends the oft-told descriptions of Galata's docks and dilapidated tavernas, delving deeper into the auditory and visual nuances, the routines shaped by the non-Turkish communities, their cultural contributions, and even their favored dishes.

Exploring sites of pleasure heavily covers the particular non-Turkish communities in shaping the urban landscape before the establishment of the Republic. These groups in question dominated İstanbul's entertainment landscape, serving as taverna owners (e.g. *Hayim* and *Maksud*) or stage performers (e.g. *Amelya*, *Peruz*, and *Virjini Minyon*) in the city's nightlife – their stories found in Ahmed Rasim's texts and re-animated by Koçu. The same year the *Lügat* was published, in 1942, the Turkish government declared its goal to “free İstanbul of Greeks by the 500th anniversary of

²⁸ Ahmed Bülend Koçu, “Kadifeli,” *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, April 30, 1942, 281.

the conquest of İstanbul [1953]" (Bora 2017, 222).²⁹ Amid this political climate, Koçu and later contributors to his *Encyclopedia*, such as Sermet Muhtar Alus, Münir Süleyman Çopanoğlu, and Yılmaz Öztuna, adopted a relatively inclusive nationalist stance, providing space for different ethnic groups in their texts.³⁰ However, Koçu's writings often conveyed a patronizing attitude towards non-Turkish communities. In writing the language of the waiter in *Kadifeli*, and particularly in the *Karaköy Caddesi* entry, he intentionally used lowercase letters for ethnic names to convey a derogatory view of non-Turkish businesses: "There were shops owned by Jewish, Greek and Armenian touts, a few haberdasheries, ready-made shoemakers, and fake stores that were named banks."³¹ Conversely, when writing about Turkish groups, he consistently capitalized *Türk* with a heroic tone, as in his on *Bıçakçı Petri*: "He killed a lion like Turkish youth with a gun for a Jewish girl named Esther."³² This stylistic choice not only reflected the era's collective biases but also shaped readers' perceptions of these communities, entrenching stereotypes within the narrative.

The *Lügat* also covers entries on Turkish women who sang, entertained, and served men in tavernas and theatres. Koçu carefully sought out his sources that highlighted specific Turkish women of the 1890s, referring to them as *nazenin* (delicate), a term not originally used by Ahmed Rasim. In the *Lügat*, *nazenins* of İstanbul were both brothel owners (e.g. *Büyük Allı*, *Küçük Allı*, *Kanbur Esmâ*, and *Saniye*) and flirtatious women who strolled in public spaces (e.g. *Çarşı İçi* [Inside the Bazaar] and *Mesireler* [Public Gardens, Parks]³³). Koçu employed *nazenin* to denote "immodest women" seeking pleasure. For instance, when writing about *Direklerarası*, a street known for hosting Ramadan festivals, Koçu used *nazenin* to emphasize immodesty:

Direklerarası, with its coffee houses, tea houses, barbershops, pudding shops, and its apocalyptic crowds, along with its delicate (*nazenin*) and beloved (*mahbub*), it was a channel through which all the social disgraces of the capital city flowed. The street was narrow, the surrounding buildings were dilapidated and decrepit, it was a district of İstanbul in a state of decay.³⁴

This street, bustling with both women and men, played host to flirtatious exchanges, ranging from verbal jests to meaningful glances. Koçu mentioned this street in several of his entries, drawn to its lively atmosphere – a stark contrast to its decline during his era due to multiple remodeling projects altering its original charm. Remarkably, rather than highlighting the street's role as a hub for cultural festivities like theatrical

²⁹ Despite the government's agenda, Koçu aimed to complete the *İstanbul Encyclopedia* project by the 500th anniversary of the conquest of İstanbul in 1953. While the government pursued an exclusionary policy, Koçu, as a writer, sought inclusive efforts to preserve İstanbul's diverse multi-ethnic past.

³⁰ In the *İstanbul Encyclopedia*, Koçu also collaborated with Kevork Pamukciyan, an Armenian historian, who wrote multiple entries about the historical Armenian communities of the city.

³¹ Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Karaköy Caddesi," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, May 14, 1942, 305.

³² Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Bıçakçı Petri," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, March 5, 1942, 190.

³³ *Mesire* is a term used for public gardens, usually located along rivers. In his entry, Koçu gave notes about Büyükdere Çayırı (meadow in one of the Bosphorus districts), Sultan Suyu (a mesire on the Asian side), Bendler (dams located in Belgrad Forest), and Hünkar Suyu (a popular mesire located in Sarıyer) mesires. See Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Mesireler," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, June 11, 1942, 44.

³⁴ Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Direklerarası," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, March 12, 1942, 198.

performances and concerts during Ramadan, Koçu's writings prefer to critique the bold demeanor of women, making this place disgraceful, a choice that resonates throughout his *Lügat*.³⁵

In addition to entries about urban pleasures, the *Lügat* includes entries like *İstanbulun* (sic) *Dertleri* (Troubles of İstanbul) that explore the city's everyday challenges. Ahmed Rasim in his critical pieces within *Şehir Mektupları* addressed issues like disorderly roads disrupting public transportation. Describing horse-drawn trams, Koçu wrote, "Because horses were not fed well enough, drivers could not ride the trams uphill. When this happened, passengers would get out of the cars, and some the fair-minded would push the trams with the drivers to help the animals."³⁶ In his accounts, some streets were also so impacted that tramcars would regularly get stuck. About the city's pervasive dirtiness, in the entry on *Çamur* (Mud), Koçu noted:

Fifty years ago, the streets of İstanbul were famously muddy. Ahmed Rasim's writings, which almost every winter complain about the mud and puddles on the streets, beautifully describe this nuisance, this disaster of mud Back then, anyone who considered the mist, the cloudburst, the gutters spilling over, the leak from the roof's edge, the walls' wetness, and the waterlogged footwear, indeed had no place being outdoors!³⁷

Koçu delineated the temporal dichotomy between his era and Ahmed Rasim's, constructing a narrative that distinctly separates the two periods. This distinction is rooted in the infrastructural transformations that marked İstanbul during Koçu's time. From the 1930s onward, İstanbul's urban planning, notably through a design competition and the development of its first master plan by Henri Prost, was significantly shaped by hygienist and beautification visions, aligning the city's transformation with the broader objectives of nation-state construction in Turkey (Akpınar 2014, 61). Hence, positioning the challenges of muddy roads and inadequate public transit to the era fifty years prior offers a narrative that illustrates the simplistic yet critical hindrances to İstanbul's daily life, thereby captivating the 1940s' readers.

In *Şehir Mektupları*, Ahmed Rasim often lamented the exorbitant cost of living in İstanbul, detailing the prices of goods and services like food, coffee, and transportation fares. In the *Lügat*, Koçu expanded on this theme with the entry *Hilekâr Esnaf* (Trickster Tradesmen), where he described how restaurateurs, butchers, bakers, and milkmen would deceive their customers.³⁸ Although Ahmed Rasim did not use the term *hilekâr*, Koçu gathered instances of such deceitful behavior and labeled them accordingly. The entry *Köprü Memurları*, *Köprücüler* (Toll Collectors of the Bridge) provides also presents a story along these lines:

³⁵ Gendered descriptions of particular people are also visible in the entries for *Kemeraltı Gülleri* (Roses of Kemeraltı) and *Kemeraltı Kopukları* (Drunkards of Kemeraltı). Kemeraltı, an "infamous bad street" of Beyoğlu, was portrayed as a place where women were "immodestly dressed" and men were "drunk." See Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Kemeraltı Gülleri," "Kemeraltı Kopukları," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, May 21, 1942, 4.

³⁶ Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "İstanbulun Dertleri," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, April 30, 1942, 281.

³⁷ Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Çamur," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, March 5, 1942, 190.

³⁸ Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Hilekâr Esnaf," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, March 26, 1942, 222.

The bridge toll collectors, known for their harsh treatment towards the public, would collect ten coins from those crossing the bridge. Those too poor to afford the ten coins would endure various difficulties to escape the collectors' grasp, during which they would become targets of the heaviest insults.³⁹

The toll system of the bridges, established in 1845 ending in 1930, significantly contributed to enhancing Beyoğlu and Galata's architectural, economic, and municipal revenue significance (Gül 2021). Koçu, living in post-toll bridge times, highlighted how disrupted pedestrian mobility revealed class inequalities, particularly affecting the economically disadvantaged with restrictions and public humiliation. In a post-1930 İstanbul, without bridge officers embodying state control, Koçu freely incorporated these critical insights into his *Lügat*. Using everyday hardships to foster nationalistic discourse, Koçu pointed out in the entry *Ecnebi Kumpanya ve Ecnebiye İtibar* (Foreign Company and Reputation to Foreigners), "Foreigners used to live in Turkey more prosperously than the Turks who own this homeland."⁴⁰ He expanded on Ahmed Rasim's singular experience on a train, where foreign officers wielded authority, into a wider narrative of nationalism. This narrative bridged the gap between different forms of control and class inequality, from toll bridges to trains, fueling nationalist sentiment.

The *Lügat* also contains multiple entries on crime in İstanbul. Koçu quoted Ahmed Rasim's depiction of Galata as a place where "... police officers perform their duty by waiting for an incident twenty-four hours of a day. There are examples of every criminal act in the name of illicit morality in Galata."⁴¹ Although Koçu briefly mentioned police officers, he was more drawn to stories of those who committed crimes and instilled fear, the *kabadayıs* (rogues) and *külhanis* (blackguards).⁴² In the entry *Onikiler*, Koçu provides an insightful description of a group of rogues engaged in ongoing criminal activities.⁴³ Ahmed Rasim (1922, 145) had encountered this gang in his youth, known for threatening, beating people, and raiding houses, which led him to avoid Galata for a while. Yet, even though this district aroused a sense of trepidation in the author, it also greatly fascinated him (Aktaş 1997, 18–23). Known for their comparatively lenient regulations, the lines between murders and illicit acts blurred, leading Koçu to weave these themes into a cohesive narrative about this area. Regarding one of the entertainment venues in Galata, Koçu writes:

³⁹ Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Köprü Memurları, Köprücüler," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, May 21, 1942, 11.

⁴⁰ Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Ecnebi Kumpanya ve Ecnebiye İtibar," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, March 12, 1942, 198.

⁴¹ Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Galata," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, March 19, 1942, 210.

⁴² Koçu wrote about *külhanis* highly active in another district, Aksaray, detailing various types in the entry *Tulumbacı-Külhani Tipleri* (Types of Firefighters – Blackguards). Koçu depicted these people with great attention to detail, categorizing them based on characteristics such as skin color, hairstyle, and dress code. Koçu was particularly interested in the dress codes of the past. See Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Tulumbacı-Külhani Tipleri," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, June 4, 1942, 28. In the *Lügat* he included an entry titled *Kıyafetler* where he detailed İstanbulites' clothing styles. See Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Kıyafetler," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, May 21, 1942, 4. Later, he published another encyclopedia about Turkish clothing styles. See Koçu (1967).

⁴³ Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Onikiler," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, June 25, 1942, 69.

Galata's most infamous rogues, along with servants, policemen, and investigators, were frequent patrons and "lookouts" (*gözcü*) of these establishments. Women, commonly picked off the streets, were escorted in these venues and offered beer. Avrupa Tiyatrosu would overflow with injured and easily deceived admirers, leaving no room to sit or stand. Bıçakçı Petri, among Galata's deadliest thugs, had daylight stabbed a young heir in this very room, all for the renowned Peruz, the most distinguished star of this place.⁴⁴

Koçu emphasized *gözcü*, a term that Ahmed Rasim frequently used, to describe a range of individuals from servants to rogues tasked with maintaining public order in Galata.⁴⁵ He observed that the district's self-regulation system for crime prevention was intricately linked to prostitution. Through this lens, Koçu broadened the limited official portrayal of prostitution, offering dynamic stories across İstanbul. He enriched the city's historical literature with detailed accounts of marginalized spaces and people often overlooked or censored (Atasoy 2023, 150). This nuanced exploration revealed that the true enforcers in the uncanny yet captivating district, characterized by broad-daylight crimes like those committed by Bıçakçı Petri, were not solely the police but also included rogues, blackguards, and firefighters. Koçu found the stories of both the heroic and the troublesome figures who shaped this district compelling enough to re-animate in his writings. This interest was particularly sparked by the shift in crime prevention authority from local to state control during his time, which, along with other changes over fifty years, enabled *Lügat* to weave together the city's histories of pleasure and peril.

Conclusions

"Don't believe the city letters I wrote" (Ahmed Rasim 1911, 79).

Two years following completion of the *Lügat*, Reşad Ekrem Koçu embarked on his *magnum opus*, the *İstanbul Encyclopedia*, a project that occupied the remainder of his life. This vast endeavor encompassed most of the *Lügat*'s entries, enriched by additional contributions from other writers. A glimpse into Koçu's personal archive of the *Encyclopedia* reveals the pieces of *Lügat* entries, carefully cut out from the published *Servet-i Fünûn* journal, reserved for future use (Figure 5).⁴⁶ Evidently, the *Lügat* served as a test-drive for the *Encyclopedia*, and Ahmed Rasim's influence loomed large in shaping Koçu's profound engagement with İstanbul. This interest prompted him to examine the stories of Ahmed Rasim and other nineteenth-century writers with increased scrutiny and critical insight, thereby providing a richer, more complex view of İstanbul's social fabric.

⁴⁴ Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Avrupa Tiyatrosu," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, March 5, 1942, 187.

⁴⁵ Koçu also included the tactics employed to evade becoming victims of crime, such as coughing loudly to scare off thieves in the entry *Gece Hırsız Kaçırın Öksürüğü* (The Cough that Lets Thieves Escape). See Ahmed Bülend Koçu, "Gece Hırsız Kaçırın Öksürüğü," *Servet-i Fünun-Uyanış*, March 19, 1942, 211.

⁴⁶ Since 2018, Koçu's archive on the *İstanbul Encyclopedia* has been catalogued and digitized with the research project titled "Reşad Ekrem Koçu and the Incomplete *İstanbul Encyclopedia*" by Kadir Has University with Salt Research. The archive contains approximately 40,000 documents classified in folders, including articles, illustrations, handwritten notes, press cuttings, postcards, and letters.

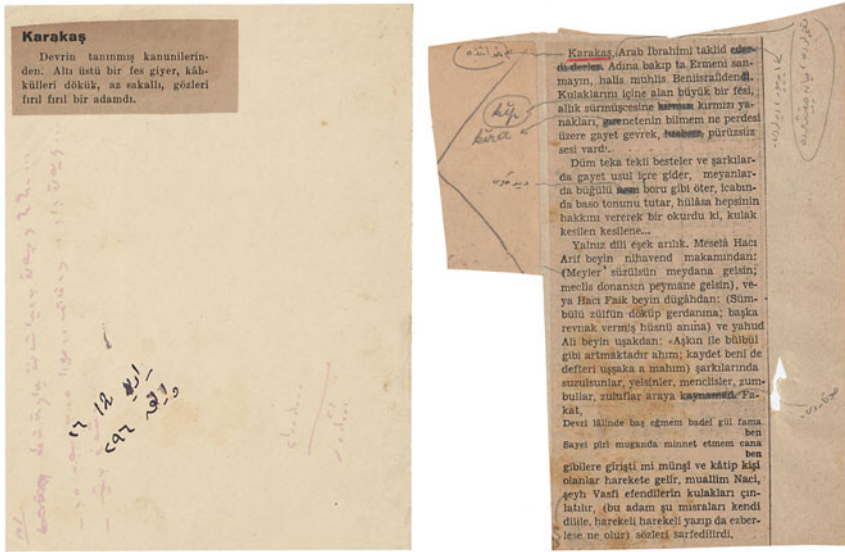


Figure 5. Journal cutting of the entry *Karakaş* (left). Additional collected piece for the entry *Karakaş* for the *Encyclopedia* (right).

Source: Kadir Has University Library – Salt Research, Reşad Ekrem Koçu's Archive.

Koçu's method of re-animating everyday experiences and mundane spaces through an encyclopedic lens offered a distinct view of İstanbul's lesser-explored history. His influence is evident in later works, such as the 1990s' *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul Encyclopedia from Yesterday to Today) (Tekeli 1993)⁴⁷ and *İstanbullaşmak* (Becoming İstanbul) (Derviş et al. 2014). The former, an encyclopedia, with systematic entries from various academic authors, provides structured and formal knowledge of İstanbul's populace and architecture, marking a departure from Koçu's *Lügat* and *Encyclopedia* that capture momentary experiences. Meanwhile, *İstanbullaşmak*, although not explicitly defined as an encyclopedia or a dictionary by its editors but rather as a collection of critical city readings, adopts subjective, alphabetical entries on İstanbul's past and present by a range of authors, reflecting Koçu's approach.

Today, Koçu is celebrated across both academic and popular domains, as evidenced by exhibitions⁴⁸ and publications about him and his *Encyclopedia*, cementing his stature as a prominent historian among the general public. His works have spurred interdisciplinary studies in urban history, encouraging engagement across diverse fields such as music, gastronomy, and gender studies. This interdisciplinary interest

⁴⁷ Semavi Eyice, one of the writers of Koçu's *Encyclopedia* was also the chairperson of the editorial board of this project.

⁴⁸ In 2023, Salt Galata in İstanbul hosted the exhibition "No Further Records: Reşad Ekrem Koçu and İstanbul Encyclopedia Archive," displaying Koçu's archival materials with curation by Bülent Tanju, Cansu Yapıcı, Gülce Özkara, and Masum Yıldız. The curation also featured clippings of entries from the *Lügat*, though without additional context. Aimed at fostering public engagement, the exhibition offered workshops, screenings, and presentations exploring Koçu's İstanbul.

has generated a wealth of ongoing scholarly work by authors from various disciplines, inspired by Koçu to examine the city's history from unique perspectives.⁴⁹ The *Lügat* stands as the inception of these endeavors, seeding numerous topics for İstanbul studies. From the role of bluefish in the past to the nuances of İstanbulites' attire, the ambiance of music in coffeehouses, and the specifics of illicit activities in brothels, the *Lügat* has laid the groundwork for a broad spectrum of subjects. It acts as the initial map, offering a preliminary sketch, and a broad overview of Koçu's İstanbul, marking the start of in-depth explorations.

A significant inquiry stemming from this study pertains to the role of literature in urban history. Ahmed Rasim's memoirs and essays provided Koçu a distinct lens through which to perceive İstanbul's urban transformation. Yet, how should this acquired knowledge be approached? Can the *Lügat* be considered an historical account? Such inquiries are relevant to Koçu's works, as he is often regarded as a more popular historian than scholarly. Edhem Eldem emphasizes this view, suggesting that while Koçu's entries, especially in the *Encyclopedia*, pique curiosity, they might not always be reliable. Eldem (2022) recommends researchers to critically assess Koçu's historical content by examining his sources. Building upon this assertion, this study delved into Koçu's original sources to gain insight into his methodology, historiography, and engagement with the city, as exemplified in his earlier work, the *Lügat*. Further investigation into Koçu's connections and endeavors will provide a more comprehensive understanding of his portrayal of İstanbul and his distinct methodological novelties.

Supplementary material. To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <https://doi.org/10.1017/npt.2024.13>

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⁴⁹ The edited book *Başka Kayda Rastlanmadı*, accompanying the exhibition in Salt Galata, featured a variety of articles from across disciplines, from architecture to history and music to archival theory, expanding the scholarly conversation on Koçu. See Tanju et al. (2023).

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